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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

JFK Talks Were Vitaly Needed

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By Drew Pearson

It will be some time before the full results of the Kennedy-Khrushchev and Kennedy-de Gaulle meetings will be known, and also some time before the impact is known and diagnosed even by the Cabinet and the diplomatic corps. The hosannas of the crowds, the newspaper headlines and Pearson the warmth of personal meetings by no means solve problems, but they help.

This writer was not one who criticized President Eisenhower's personal diplomacy. On the contrary, I reported that his Camp David meetings with Khrushchev definitely boosted the chance of world peace. I also traveled the length of Eisenhower's trip to the Near East, Afghanistan, and India; reported that the mere fact he would take this long trip made a profound impression on people as well as governments.

It was absolutely essential likewise that President Kennedy sit face to face with two men, the most difficult he will have to deal with but the most important in working out the problems of peace. In these days of modern communications, a President sometimes has to pick up the overseas telephone to reach another chief of state, in which case it's a great help to have known him personally.

These are days when world peace can depend on quick communications, quick decisions, and quick mistakes. I was in Colorado Springs recently at the North American Air Defense Command where a freak of the moon's rays sounded a radar signal last October indicating that Russian planes were attacking the United States en masse. Fortunately, the coolness of Air Marshal Roy Slemmon of Canada, then in command, averted a catastrophe. But Peter Wy-

den in the Saturday Evening Post this week further demon-

strates how easy are the chances of accidental war.

All this means that the heads of the two most powerful states must know each other and be able to have personal telephone contact with each other.

No matter what John F. Kennedy brings home from his talks with Nikita Khrushchev, therefore, their meeting was important in that it gave Khrushchev a chance to see that the new American President has a brain packed with facts, plus imagination and a capacity for friendliness, yet a determination not to let the United States get pushed around.

Ike's Chickens

Dwight D. Eisenhower, back in the political limelight before 6000 cheering Republicans last week, lit into the Kennedy Administration on the domestic front, but had some words of caution and tolerance for Kennedy on the foreign front.

A lot of people have forgotten — though obviously Ike hasn't — how many and how tough were the foreign problems he passed on to his successor.

It was just one year ago that American-Russian relations reached their lowest ebb with the U-2 incident and the disinviting of Ike to Moscow. Those relations suffered another blow one month later when the President was disinited to Japan. And it was just after the election, though before the Kennedy inauguration, that Eisenhower severed diplomatic relations with Cuba and planned at first to unleash the Cuban freedom fighters against Castro.

Finally, it was last December, between the election and the inauguration, that pro-Communist forces began such a victorious March in Laos that Eisenhower seriously debated military intervention in Southeast Asia. The retiring President informed Kennedy during their first personal post-election meeting that Laos was the most

difficult problem he would inherit.

The former President well remembered that the chickens found today in the Kennedy henhouse are Republican chickens, and he was fair enough to remind 6000 Republicans of this fact. He did not dwell on how sickly these Republican chickens were. But he could have said without exaggeration that no American President in the last half century ever sat down at a conference table with lower national prestige — through no fault of his own — less powerful and in a weaker bargaining position than did John F. Kennedy in Vienna. Whatever he brings back today will be a plus.

Behind the Scenes

Alabama has been coming in for a lot of criticism in big Northern cities lately, but a lot of residents of those same cities can credit two Alabamians for better housing in congested areas of their cities. They are Sen. John Sparkman and Congressman Albert Rabus, both of Alabama and both the late leaders for better housing in Oklahoma. Gov. H. M. Bondmonson has promised to make sure that he will run for reelection. Mike Monroney, recipient of the Collier Award as one of the best members of Congress, has been trying — not very successfully — to carry a bill in Washington to Ed Murrow, the new information chief, to amend privately to add that

Lever Brothers spends almost as much money advertising soap

as the United States Information Service spends to defend the USA all over the world. (And Congress has just refused to vote more.) ... Soviet scientists have hinted that coded messages from their Venus rocket indicate the planet Venus must have a rugged mountainous surface ... Gen. Thomas Power, the Strategic Air Commander, has written an urgent report to his superiors claiming he now has positive evidence that Russia has been testing nuclear bombs. Presumably the evidence must have been picked up by American airplanes which collect air samplings around Russia.

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